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ABSTRACT

One of a series of 20 literary magazine profiles written to help faculty advisors wishing to start or improve their publication, this profile provides information on staffing and production of "Inscriptions," the magazine published by Bryant Intermediate School, Salt Lake City, Utah. The introduction describes the literary magazine contest (and criteria), which was sponsored by the National Council of Teachers of English and from which the 20 magazines were chosen. The remainder of the profile--based on telephone interviews with the advisor, the contest entry form, and the two judges' evaluation sheets--discusses (1) the magazine format, including paper and typestyles; (2) selection and qualifications of the students on staff, as well as the role of the advisor in working with them; (3) methods used by staff for acquiring and evaluating student submissions; (4) (4) sources of funding for the magazine, including fund raising activities if applicable, and production costs; and (5) changes and problems occurring during the advisor's tenure, and anticipated changes. The May 1984 issue of the magazine is appended. (HTH)

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AN EXEMPLARY HIGH SCHOOL LITERARY MAGAZINE: INSCRIPTIONS

Compiled by

Hilary Taylor Holbrook

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marjorie Coombs

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

INTRODUCTION

In 1984, the National Council of Teachers of English began a national competition to recognize student literary magazines from senior high, junior high, and middle schools in the United States, Canada, and the Virgin Islands. Judges in the state competitions for student magazines were appointed by state leaders who coordinated the competition at the state level.

The student magazines were rated on the basis of their literary quality (imaginative use of language; appropriateness of metaphor, symbol, imagery; precise word choice; rhythm, flow of language), types of writing included (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, drama), quality of editing and proofreading, artwork and graphic design (layout, photography, illustrations, typography, paper stock, press work), and frontmatter and pagination (title page, table of contents, staff credits). Up to 10 points were also either added for unifying themes, cross-curricular involvement, or other special considerations, or subtracted in the case of a large percentage of outside professional and/or faculty involvement.

In the 1984 competition, 290 literary magazines received ratings of "Above average," 304 were rated "Excellent," and 44

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earned "Superior" ratings from state contest judges. On the basis of a second judging, 20 of the superior magazines received the competition's "Highest Award."

As a special project, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills has selected 20 magazines from those receiving "Superior" ratings to serve as models for other schools wishing to start or improve their own student literary magazines. The profiles of these magazines are based on the faculty advisor's contest entry sheet, the judges' evaluation sheets, and interviews with the faculty advisors. Where possible, the magazines themselves have been appended. Information for ordering copies of the magazines is contained at the end of each profile.

INSCRIPTIONS

Bryant Intermediate School

Salt Lake City, Utah

Principal: Harold J. Trussel

Faculty Advisor: Marjorie Coombs

1984 Student Editors: Casee Caldwell,

Chris Sobchack, Laura Jane Wilson

in·scrip·tion n. Something that is inscribed.

in·scribe v. To write, engrave, or print as a lasting record.

Bryant Intermediate School is a two-year junior high school, grades seven and eight, near the center of Salt Lake City. It is the only school in the city that draws a cross section of students from the community: from the industrial central city through the university faculty neighborhoods to the wealthier suburbs to the west. The 715 students also include Asian, Black, and Chicano minorities. Bryant has published Inscriptions, the student literary magazine, for over six years, preparing students for work on the literary magazines of the different high schools they will attend.

FORMAT: XEROXED

Inscriptions measures 8 1/2" x 11", and is xeroxed on bond paper from typewritten copy and bound with a red plastic vello binding. The white card stock cover is illustrated with the name

of the magazine in a red sand motif. Drawings of sand and seashells also appear in black on the pages listing the contents. Line drawings illustrate the poetry and short stories.

Some of the works are designated as winners in two writing contests: the first from the district level of the PTA Reflections contest, and the second from the Utah State Creative Writing Contest.

SUBMISSIONS: STUDENT DECISIONS

The Inscriptions staff, comprised of 6 to 10 editorial members and 4-6 art members, encourage students to submit for publication by means of announcements, skits presented to classes, and personal announcements to the language arts teachers. Occasionally, a teacher will ask a student to submit a noteworthy work. About 90 percent of the submissions are generated by classroom assignments, while the rest consist of personal writing, some of which is done specifically for the magazine. Submissions are somewhat weighted toward the 8th grade class, because the older students are more familiar with the publication, but the response from the 7th grade is quite good.

Staff members meer after school and, as faculty advisor Marjorie Coombs notes, during many lunch hours because of busing. Early in the year, members look at past issues of Inscriptions and set guidelines for evaluating stories and poetry. Ms. Coombs, who has been advisor since the magazine was first published, acts as a consultant: staff members make all the editorial decisions.

Authors' names are removed from submissions by the advisor so that works are anonymous during evaluation. There is no limit to the number of works a student may submit. Each piece is read by at least three staff members, who give their individual judgments, and who do not evaluate their own works. Those works receiving "mixed reviews" are then read as a group until an agreement is reached as to whether or not they should be included. The authors' names are then added after selection.

Most of the drawings in the magazine are done by art staff members. Occasionally, a student will ask to illustrate his or her own story. Ms. Coombs notes that from time to time, illustrations are done over by another staff member if the staff feels that a drawing "is not quite as good as it could be."

PRODUCTION: A LOT OF COORDINATION

All of the writing and artwork are done by students. They also do approximately 90 percent of the editing and 90 percent of the proofreading. Design and paste-up work is divided about evenly between staff members and faculty.

Students type their works of poetry, and a parent volunteer types the stories. Any "clean-up" or retyping is done by the advisor. The magazine's 51 pages are xeroxed by the staff members and the advisor, then taken to the district print shop for collating. The cover is also printed at the print shop. Two shifts of three students each are excused from morning or afternoon classes for one day to work with the advisor on binding. Ms. Coombs admits that production of this sort "requires a lot of coordination."

FUNDING: ZERO

Inscriptions receives no funding from the district or the school, and is supported entirely by sale of the magazine, which is produced at 90 cents per copy and is sold for $1.00 each. Expenses are kept at a minimum. The cost of copying the 450-500 magazines is taken out the teachers' fund, while the print shop charges for collating but does not charge to print the cover. The bindings cost approximately 30 cent each.

CHANGES: A LASTING RECORD

Because the magazine is self-sufficient, minor changes in the cover design are the only alterations Inscriptions has undergone in its six issues. During her tenure as advisor, Ms. Coombs has not encountered any problems with production, but concedes that copying and binding are time consuming and that production requires "a tremendous amount of work." It is a credit to the students on the Inscriptions staff that they are willing to take on the task. It is also remarkable that students in the intermediate grades can produce a magazine with such strong writing, a lasting record of their efforts. The benefits of such experience are reflected in the high school magazines to which many of them will contribute.

**

Copies of Inscriptions may be obtained from

Bryant Intermediate School

#40 South Eighth East

Salt Lake City, UT 84102

Cost: $1.50 (includes postage)

DIGITIZED BY

May, 1984

Bryant Intermediate School
40 South Eighth East
Salt Lake City, Utah 84102

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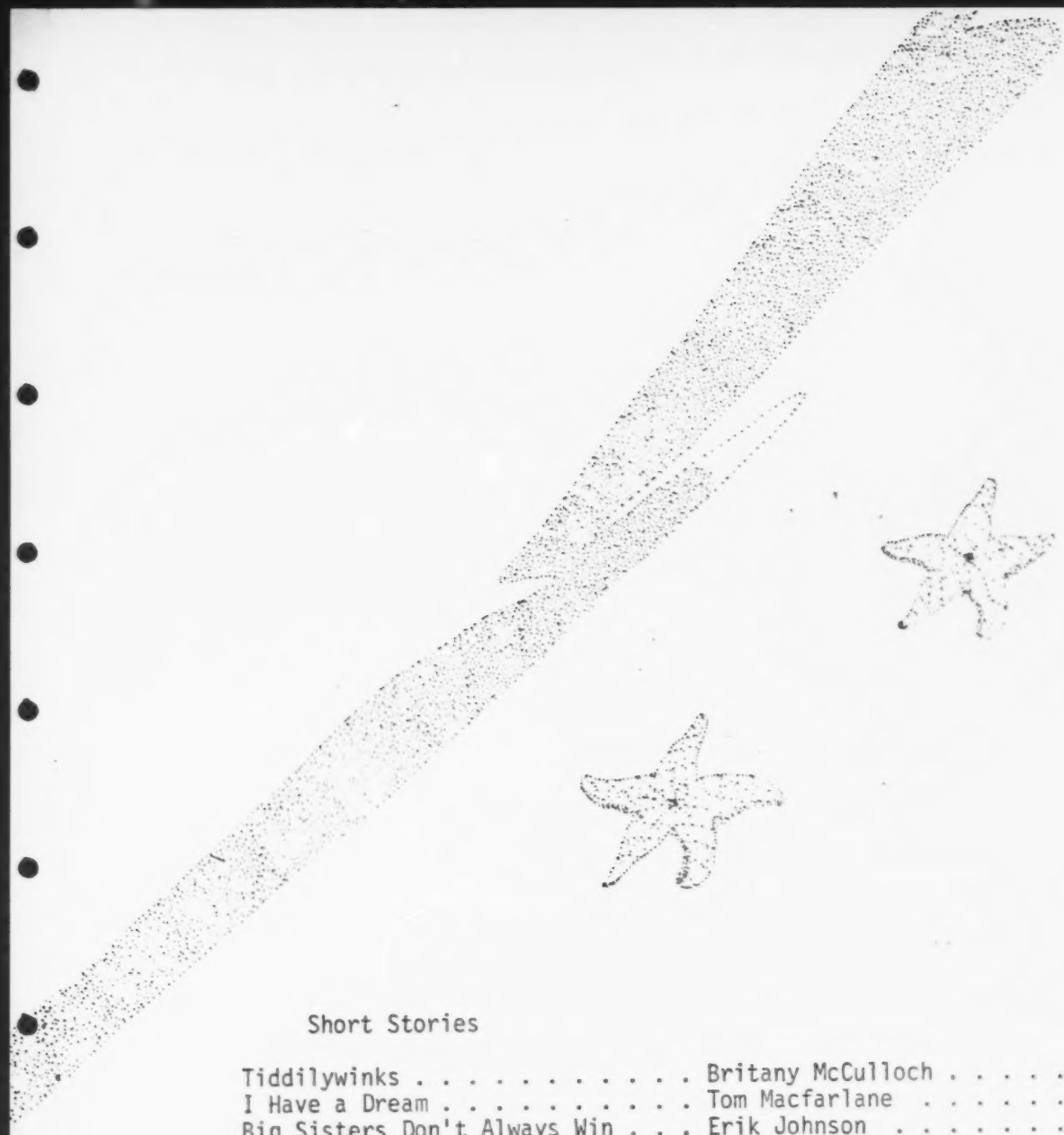

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I HAVE A DREAM . . .
Maren Clawson

RETARDED
DIFFEREN
T-JERK-W
EIRD-MOR
ON-NARRO
W-MINDED
DUMB-GAY

I have a typewriter that's stuck on eight spaces
Like people who can't see past clothes and faces.
They're completely missing the important part.
They judge the outside and not the heart.
Accepting uniqueness takes much more strength
Than just pressing a key to change margin's length.
A dream of acceptance isn't enough.
It's living the dream that's really tough.

First Place, 1984 District PTA Reflections Contest

Honorable Mention
Junior Short Story
1984 State
Creative Writing Contest

TIDDILYWINKS
Britany Mc Culloch

As I was searching frantically in the musty room, I could smell the smoke of a cigarette that had been put out a few minutes before. I accidentally knocked over a guitar that was leaning against the wall, but wasted no time in picking it up. The loud calls of my four-year-old brother, Aaron, could be heard upstairs, but Jeremy was nowhere to be found.

My brother was the kind of person who couldn't resist a temptation. I remember the times that you had to keep your eyes glued to him or he would sneak into the kitchen, open the refrigerator and eat the cheese. He liked most kinds. If you couldn't find him around the house, you'd just look near the fridge and there he'd be.

If he wasn't there, he most likely had spotted the cat stretched out on the floor and had started crawling on him. His third favorite pastime was to have someone turn on "Sesame Street" for him, and he'd plop down in front of the TV and watch till it was over.

I stood there remembering some of Jeremy's special features and heard a shout that came from the front yard. Aaron and I raced out the door and stood on the front porch stunned, for across the yard, standing over a large ditch, was a friend of ours holding a small, wet child in his arms. My mother came out the door just a few seconds after us. She, too, was shocked. Her face turned a pale color and tears came quickly to her eyes. The spaghettios I ate for lunch began doing flips as I became sick to my stomach.

At age five, I didn't really know what was going on, but I could tell from the happenings around me that something was wrong. Tears came to my eyes as I heard the sirens of the ambulance that was on its way. My mother explained to me that my brother had slipped out the front door while the sitters who lived next door were "occupied." The temptation of the ditch lured him into the dirty water. I could guess from the smeared mascara on my mom's face that what had happened was bad, but I was still confused about the whole thing.

The panic in the neighbor's front yard was noticed by some neighbors who lived on the other side of our small, white house. They came rushing over to see if there was anything that could be done. My mom sent me over to their house until things cleared up. I didn't want to go, but I <u>had</u> to.

I entered their beautifully furnished home that never had any smell. Little containers of candy were always lying around the house. As I sat down on the soft, thick carpet, I reached for a piece off the coffee table in the front room where we were seated and plopped it into my mouth.

"Wanna cookie?" asked Sandy, who happened to be my best friend at the time and was only one year older.

"No thanks," I said, and moved the candy into my cheek so it bulged.

"Everything's gonna be okay so don't worry about it."

"I don't want to die," I said, still sniffling from all the tears.

"Wanna play tiddilywinks?"

I agreed, and she reached for a coffee can out of a closet and dumped out a whole pile of buttons, all sizes and colors

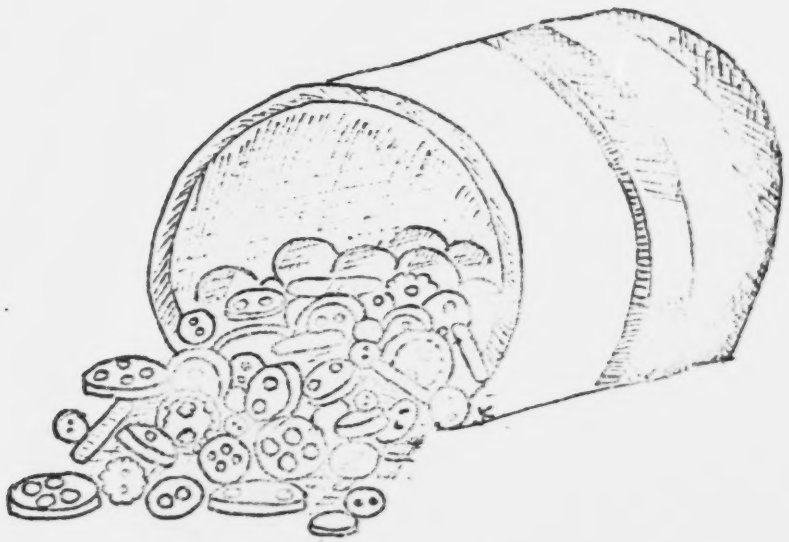
"You can go first," I offered, not really caring about the games.

She won most of the games. I didn't want to play. All I wanted was my mom.

It was a few minutes past 6:00 PM, so we turned on the news. My brother came on strapped to a small stretcher. The newscaster explained what happened and said he didn't make it to the hospital in time. He died.

"How could he die?" I thought. "I didn't even know him."

"I was mad, then sad. The tears came again and I cried hard. Sandy's mom made us clean up the buttons before I left. She put them back, and I walked next door to my house with tears in my eyes.



Honorable Mention, 1984 District PTA Reflections Contest

I HAVE A DREAM

Tom Macfarlane

The timid young children are waiting to be taken into the unknown. Afraid. Alone. Some utter sickly cries, and others nervously look at pictures in magazines.

Suddenly a name is called. Reluctantly, a frightened young boy creeps into the quiet hallway and through one of the doors. A little quick-moving man talks to him; calms him down. He jovially calls the boy by name and inquires about his friends and activities. As he probes and peers and presses to examine the young boy, he gently questions him about the foods he eats, the things he does in preschool, and what he has been doing with his brothers at home.

The young boy leaves with a feeling of assurance that he will soon feel well again.

A dream, a resolve begins to unfold. In junior high the dream grows in science and math classes. High school is crammed with physiology, biology, chemistry. Advanced placement classes in physics and calculus demand long hours of study and a high level of performance. Then the young man has a new struggle--college. Organic chemistry is the key. "A" grades are needed and hard to achieve.

The smell of burning flesh fills his nostrils. An artery bursts in the patient, and blood is all over the young man observing the surgeons at work.

"Do you think you can handle this day in and day out?" he questions himself. "Do you want it enough? Do you want to commit all your time? What if you are not accepted into medical school? What if you fail?" But. . . .

Frightened little children waiting, afraid of the unknown. They come in one by one. I call them by name and ask who their friends are and what activities they like.

Is that a smile I can see lighting up the feverish little boy's face?

LIMERICK: FRED'S KUMQUAT

Mary Daines

There once was a grocer named Fred,
Who looked at his kumquat, and said:
"The peas are quite green,
As far as I've seen,
But you, my poor kumquat, look dead!"

AN OTOLARYNGOLOGIST'S DREAM
David Funk

I dream of ears, noses and throats
All floating around in space.
I dream I am going to operate
Just using a can of mace.

The instruments are boiled in oil
To make them shiny and slick.
I use a shaver to make the cut.
The name of the razor is Bic.

When the tonsils are out and ears are tubed,
The operation then is done.
Dreaming can bring such a different life,
Full of wisdom or horror or fun.

Honorable Mention
1984 District PTA Reflections Contest

ORANGE
Crissi Stauffer

Blinding orange
Squirting fresh from fruit
Balloons drifting like miniature berries
The sticky stripes of marmalade
Furry, thick stripes on a fat, smug cat
Paint on a restored car
Flourescent stripes on glow-in-the-dark shoes
Or on a flashing, bright barricade
Or the glow of a hideous, laughing jack-o-lantern--
That's Orange!

BIG SISTERS DON'T ALWAYS WIN
Erik Johnson

I was asleep in my room when my sister, Margit, came running in and woke me up. "Come on Erik," she said. "Don't you remember?"

"Go away," I groaned. "I'll do it later."

I was only five but Margit was six which made her the boss. Margit made me promise that I would go in the basement without the lights on. At that time the basement was scary. It had man-eating spiders, mice with five inch long teeth, and ghosts. Everything was damp and cold. I had been down in the basement only once before. It was when my dad was fixing the furnace. I hung on to him for dear life thinking that a monster would likely jump out at me just as if I were alone.

The hours seemed to speed by as I finally realized that I had to do what I had to do. I got Margit and told her I was going into the basement. She had a great big grin on her face. Oh how I wished I could wash it off. I turned around and said, "I don't want to."

"But you have to," she snobbishly said.

"Why?"

"If you don't, I'll tell mom that you were the one who put the fingerholes in the butter."

"But there aren't any holes in the butter."

"So? I can always make some."

I walked to the edge of the stairs that go down to the basement.

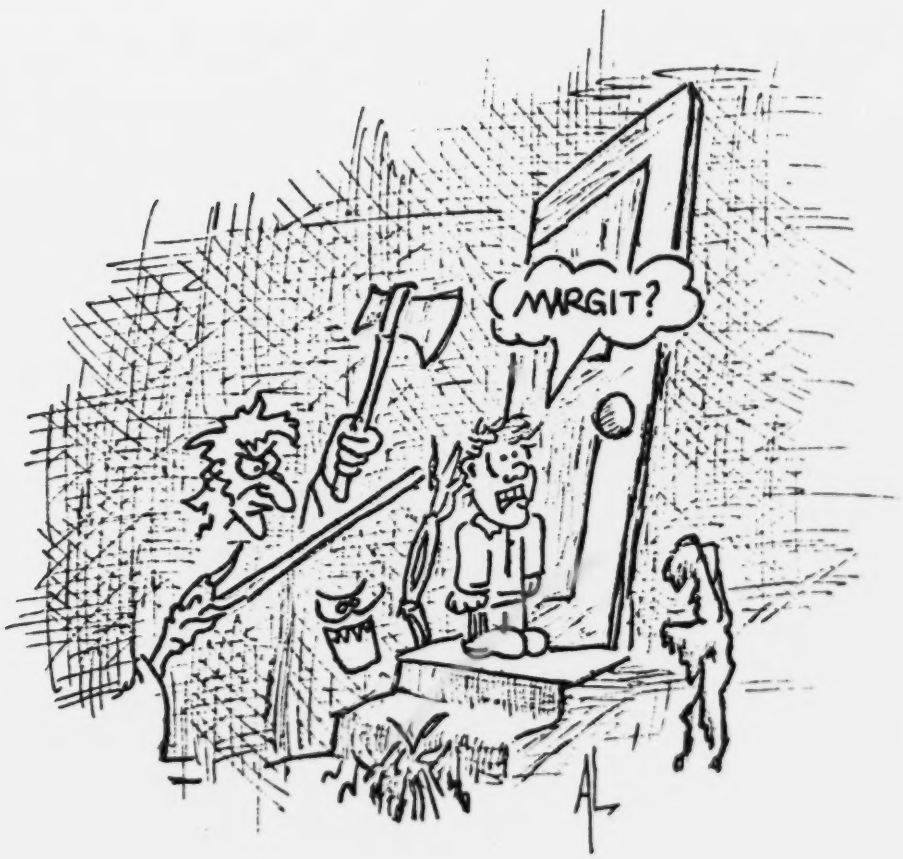
"Go on," she insisted.

I slowly walked down the steps when Wham! Margit slammed the door. I ran up the stairs and pounded on the door. "Let me out!"

"No way!" she yelled. "You have to count to ten in each room first. That means seven times."

My heart dropped down to my feet as I realized there was no hope. I had to do what she said or I would get in trouble somehow. I cautiously walked down the staircase until I got down to the bottom. "Maybe I can trick her," I thought. "If I count to ten and then each time I do it, turn my head in a different direction and gradually say it softer, she might think I went in all the rooms." So I started. While I was doing

this, my fright of the basement grew. I started seeing things like ghosts and golden eyes peering from the dark, and then water started dripping on me. I could feel my heart pound as if it were going to come right out. I got so scared I ran up the stairs and slammed my shoulder against the door. Then I ran after Margit and chased her into the kitchen, around the table in the dining room, and into the bathroom until my parents stopped us. I told them what Margit did and they gave her a licking. HA! HA! I sure got her back!



MASTERS OF THE SEA
Erik Boice

Oceans,
Crashing and pummeling against the surf.
Large hands smoothing out the shore
for eternities.
In the giant soup bowl
a great beast
rides the waves.
Its giant fins swishing
through the icy blue water,
alone,
yet always staying with its clan.
Another creature rides the waves,
Its large arms
reaching up and catching the wind.
Gliding along,
searching for its prey.
as the thing spies the clan,
it thrusts out
one of its many teeth,
striking
one of the clan.
Another shot,
and yet another,
searing the whale with pain.
It is now only a matter of time.
The huge wooden craft
rides back,
victorious.
Pulling along one more,
of the mighty,
yet dying clan.
Soon there will be no more.
None to kill,
none to hunt.
Only then will man realize what he has done.
It is my dream,
that this horror never happens.

8

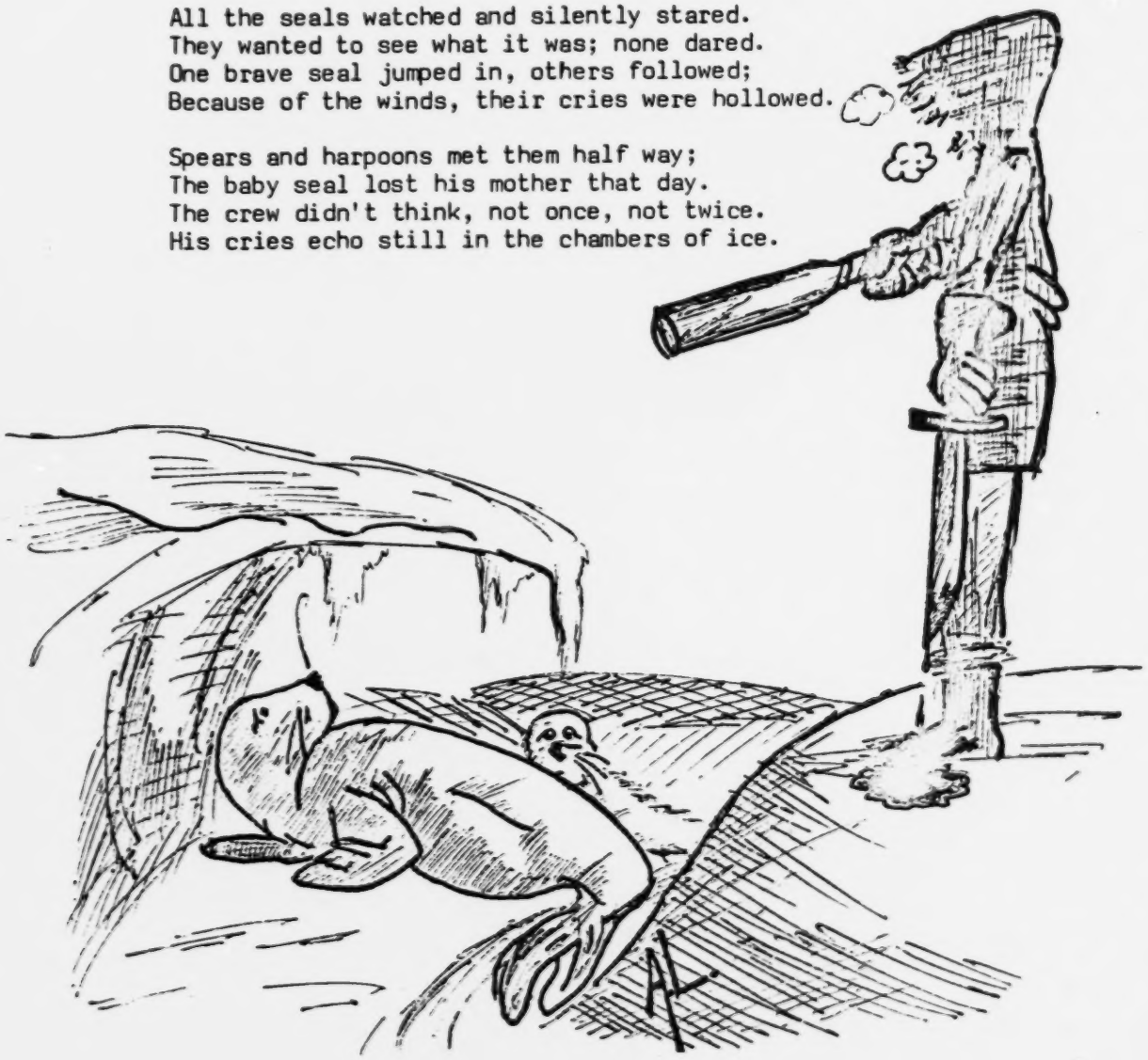
CHAMBERS
Lisa Quinn

In cold places near oceans and seas,
Live the furry white seals alone in the breeze.
Their thick fur and slippery fins
Allow them to swim and not freeze in the winds.

A baby seal was playing and having fun
'Til his attention was drawn to a ship in the sun.
As the ship drew closer his curiosity grew
And he heard the noise of the ship and its crew.

All the seals watched and silently stared.
They wanted to see what it was; none dared.
One brave seal jumped in, others followed;
Because of the winds, their cries were hollowed.

Spears and harpoons met them half way;
The baby seal lost his mother that day.
The crew didn't think, not once, not twice.
His cries echo still in the chambers of ice.



THE BLOOD TEST
Tena Sloan

As the tardy bell rang for second period, my science teacher motioned for everyone to be quiet and said, "Today we are going to take our blood test. I would like everyone to copy the information on the board, get a razor, a blood test card, and take turns using the anti-A and anti-B solutions. After you draw your blood, put a few drops of it in one circle, and a few drops of it in the other circle. Mix one circle with the anti-A solution, and the other circle with the anti-B solution. Follow the directions on the board to tell what blood type you are."

"Great," I said to my friend, "it would take an army to get me to do that. Why don't I get paper cuts at times like these?"

I think I have an unknown phobia which I call the fear of blood. I get awfully weak at the sight of that red sticky stuff.

I took an exceptionally long time in writing down the board information; everyone else had started to stab themselves with razor blades.

After I finished writing, my friend stuck her finger that was drizzling with blood right under my nose.

"Yuk," was my reply as I turned my head to look at a more pleasing sight which happened to be the board.

"Hurry up," another friend of mine said, "or you will miss out on points for this assignment."

"I'm coming," I mumbled unhappily.

The next thing I remember is that I was seated in a chair in front of a jagged razor, a fumey pad of alcohol, a spotless blood test card, and the blue anti-A solution, and the yellow anti-B solution. Almost the whole class was watching me as I took the razor and poked at my finger. Of course I wasn't doing it very hard at all, it was just like tickling myself. I didn't dare press harder or blood might come out.

"You have got to do it harder than that," one boy said teasingly.

I knew that, but I just couldn't get enough courage to do it. I asked my friend to do it for me, since I couldn't do it.

"No," I said sharply as I jerked my hand away from the treacherous razor, "I can't let you do it."

"But you have to," she said.

"It will hurt," I said knowingly.

"Just a little bit," she said reassuringly.

After five minutes, someone covered my eyes and my friend stabbed me with the tiny razor blade.

"Ouch!" I yelled as the blade broke my skin and then was pulled out.

"It's all over," she said with a big grin on her face. "It wasn't so bad."

The puncture, even though it was painful, was not deep enough because it did not produce enough blood. My teacher, seeing what terror I had gone through, squeezed my finger and dabbed it on the card.

After that I started to feel weird. I walked around the classroom in a daze. I didn't know what was going on. I was confused. I began to sweat, and I think I almost fainted.

"Oh my gosh," someone said worriedly, "she is going to faint."

"She is pale white," my close friend said.

"Now she is turning green," a boy said observingly.

"Get the teacher," some person yelled.

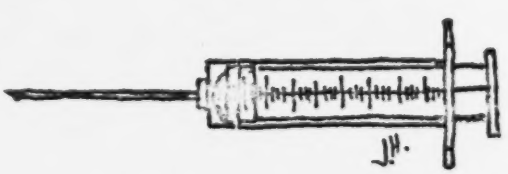
My teacher and my friend took me to the office and I called home. My friend went to my locker for me. After she left, I started to turn very cold.

My mom came down to school and took me home. When I got home, I ate lunch and then took a warm bath. I was feeling better already.

The next day at school, it was funny to see all my classmates rush up to me and ask me if I was okay.

"Sure," I said strongly.

In science, I discovered that I was type O blood. I must have not drawn enough blood because my mom has type AB blood, and my dad has type A+ blood. I had to go through all that trouble of getting sick, and I didn't even find out what blood type I am!



THE NEW YEAR
Jeni Kotok

It starts with January first
The beginning of a new year:
A brand new baby
full of cheer.
  As February comes
  The child grows.
  Beginning to crawl,
  To March he goes.
    In like a lion
    out like a lamb
    and on to April
    The little boy ran.
      The child now
      Is out to play
      A growing kid
      In the month of May.
        When June finally
        Rolls around,
        The kid is a man
        Six feet off the ground.
          Great is the seventh
          Month of July -
          And into the business world
          This man flies.
            In August he marries
            And has a child.
            His life is slowed down
            At a pace more mild.
              With September
              This guy feels old
              Not quite as new
              Not quite as bold.
                In October
                the hair turns gray.
                The man is aging more now
                every day.
                  His bones are frigid
                  In the month of November
                  And childhood days
                  Are hard to remember.
                    Late in December
                    The old man passes away,
                    And a baby new year
                     Has come to stay.

THE CHICKEN CHASE
Jennie Hinckley

I was excited to at last be big enough to go to the rodeo in Oakley. As I walked through the gate, I heard the announcer say, "All the kids line up for the chicken chase."

"Come on, Jennie," my father shouted. "Get in the ring!"

"But I'm only seven, I'll never win."

"It's only a chicken chase. Get down there," he replied.

When I got down there, it was the first time I'd realized how big the ring really was. And there were so many kids. What am I doing here? I don't even know what to do, I thought to myself.

The speaker blared out, "We will now start the chicken chase. Whoever catches the chicken can have it for dinner tonight."

"Wow! I thought, it would be great to provide dinner for my whole family."

I decided I would try my hardest for that chicken, and I would win it! I could just see myself holding the chicken in my hands. With determination I set out to catch that chicken. Everyone was shouting, cheering us on. I felt hands on my back, pushing me. It was so hot I was sweating all over. As the perspiration ran in my mouth, it tasted hot and salty, and the dust choked my throat. I never saw the official toss out the chicken, but everyone was running all over the ring chasing it. I was too tired to keep up, so I lagged behind. As I tiredly gazed over the ring, I saw the chicken racing straight for me -- with everyone else dashing behind it. I was scared but didn't have time to get out of the way. As everyone charged for me, the chicken darted in a different direction. Relieved, I started chasing after it. When it came to the fence, everyone dived for it. I stuck my hand into the confusion of arms and legs and closed my eyes. Feeling the chicken's neck, I jerked it up. All the kids knew I had it and backed off. I must have been strangling it, for the announcer noticed it and called over the loud speaker that I should hold it by its legs. As it squawked, I flipped it over, grabbed its kicking legs and marched proudly over to my family and presented the chicken to my mother. Turning white, she told me to let it loose in the field next to the rodeo stand. She would have nothing to do with it. She said, "I'm not going to kill and pluck that chicken for our Sunday dinner!"

After all I had gone through, I was not about to turn that chicken loose. I wanted to keep it! It was the first time I had won any competition and in a funny way, it felt good all over.

"The winner is Jennie Hinckley, age seven," the voice said over the loud speaker. People started cheering in the stands. I felt my face turn as red as the chicken's comb. But I loved it!

A VACUUM CLEANER
Mark Pett

Roaring like a politician when,
after giving a long lecture
on drug abuse and our teenage society,
he finds his kid snorting heroin,
A monstrous, uniquely-shaped, mechanical thing
swallows up everything in its path;
A brisk broom swiftly sweeps
unwanted, alienated objects and undefinable creatures
that lurk in the carpet,
Smelling of an uncleaned pasture,
hence nothing can penetrate it,
Like biting into a rotten fruit,
and immediately wanting to dispose of it.

POWER
Rebecca Walker

Power is bright glittering gold
It tastes like ice cream that is too cold
and hurts your head
Power feels like a large rough diamond
you are gripping too hard
It sounds like an orchestra
playing loud and strong violent music
Power acts like a million-dollar shopping spree
It thinks carefully
so it won't be lost
Power looks like a bright day
where colors stand out:
The leaves and the grass are a rich green,
the sky a vivid blue.
Power looks like a winter day
when the snow is so bright it flashes
like diamonds
Power is a glittering feeling

CHRISTMAS
Emily Hansen

Christmas brings such special things
Candy canes and bells that ring
Gingerbread men and mistletoe
Holly wreaths and cookie dough
Christmas trees and Santa's sleigh
Little kids waiting for Christmas day
Stockings filled with yummy treats
Sugar plums and candied sweets
Santa's reindeer and all the toys
Dolls for girls and trains for boys
Kris Kringle, or Santa, or Jolly St. Nick
Whatever his name he's a child's first pick.

FRUSTRATION
Heather Kasten

Frustration is the color magenta

It tastes like a piece of steak
That has too much gristle to chew

Frustration smells
Like a worn out shoe
With a knot you can't untie

It looks like someone trying
To cross an intersection
Without a light

Frustration acts like my sister
When for the twentieth time
Has forgotten to ask
When she wears something of mine

It feels like not knowing
Why your boyfriend
Broke up with you
After five months
And there is no reason

Frustration is
Trying to type your homework
Just after you learned the keys

It sounds like the phone
Ringing every five minutes
When you're trying to take a shower

Magenta is the color of frustration

THE SAVIOR AMONG THE SWINE
Colleen Sabey

Shannon turned to me, smiling a huge grin and then started walking towards me like a robot, closer and closer. I stumbled backwards and my feet went down. I grabbed at her, but she kicked my knee and I fell backwards, plummeting down. My stomach was gone. Then B R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R R I N G! My alarm clock went off. I fumbled for it and hit the buttom. Shannon. I was wide awake. Not another day of Shannon. Maybe she was absent today.

Shannon was the kind of girl who acted like her years of private school (all 2-1/2 months of them) was like she was a Savior among the swine. She always said how everything was "kindygarden work" and copied from the poor soul destined to sit by her. Nearly every important test she sluffed and the teacher usually assumed she would have gotten 100% because of the perfect homework she turned in. Some teachers can be really stupid.

I remember the time a teacher gave a pop quiz worth 500 points, which in that class could make the difference between a B- and a F. The girl who usually sat by her was absent and Shannon got maybe 2 or 3 right, but since there was 48 other questions, she failed. I don't know how she managed to pull an A out of the class and the next day the teacher explained how the quiz was unfair because some of the questions were trick ones and that day she gave another test on which Shannon got three wrong. The exact same ones the girl next to her missed.

I went into class, Shannon's class and sat down saying a silent plea: please let Shannon be absent. Please, please, please.

"Hi," Shannon said, sitting down next to me. No such luck. I tried to concentrate on the writing on the chalkboard hoping she would leave me alone. "Lemme borrow your kindy-garden paper."

I decided. "No." That was it, no more taking advantage of me.

"You always let me before. Why'd ya change your mind?"

"Did you know someone is born every second in the world?"

"Just gimme it. I don't have all day.

"I've heard that man has been around for 100 thousand years."

"She's going to collect them in a minute. Hurry and give it." She held out her hand, looking to see if she was collecting them yet.

"That means at that rate there has been 3 trillion 150 billion 600 thousand people on the earth."

"Who cares? Just gimme your kindy-work."

I slammed by books down on my desk. "I said no, ok? Read my lips: N-O."

She grabbed my book and started thumbing through it. Where'd you put it?"

"I never said you could copy it."

Silence.

"Gimme my book." I reached and grabbed a handful of pages. Just then she pulled back and the pages ripped out. She sat stunned for a minute, then realized what had happened.

"Now look what you've done." She said.

"Me? You grabbed my book and made me rip out all the pages!"

"You're the unreasonable one. I was up all night with my poor sick sister and I didn't have time to do my assignment."

"Well, excuuuuuse me!"

"Girls!" the teacher said.

"Lauren started it."

"Oh, sure," I said.

"To the office," the teacher pointed to the door.

"Me? Shannon grabbed my book!"

"Just go."

"I'll get you for this." I got up to leave grabbing my defaced book from her and with the pages still in my hand stormed out of the room.

"Since so many students have been caught cheating, we will have a test that totally determines your grade. Even if you are presently receiving an A, you may have an F after this test." the teacher said walking down the aisle passing out tests.

Suddenly I got an idea. "Don't worry, Shan, I'll help you," I whispered.

"Thanks. No hard feelings?"

"Nah."

"Lauren," the teacher said.

"Why do you always pick on me? Shannon was talking, too."

"I knew that, but I'm sure Shannon had a very good reason," the teacher smiled at her, and she smiled back.

"Oh, of course. Shannon had a very good reason."

"Would you like to make a visit to the principal, Lauren?"

"No thanks, I'm sure he is a very busy man."

"Very well. Any questions?"

I raised my hand. The teacher looked around hoping to see another hand up but there was no one.

"Oh, teacher, over here," I said.

"Yes, Lauren."

"How many do you miss to get an F?"

"Fifteen."

"Thanks."

"Ok, begin."

I scanned the paper. What an easy test! I went through and marked all of them at random, then went through to see how many were wrong. Seventeen. Good. "Here," I turned my paper towards Shannon. "I'll go sharpen my pencil. Hurry." I got up and started walking to the pencil sharpener, looking at each person's paper as I went past. One kid slapped his hands over his paper.

"Miss Beckworth, Lauren looked at my paper." he glared at me.

"Touchy, touchy," I whispered.

"Lauren, go back to your seat."

"But I gotta sharpen my pencil."

"Just let her," Shannon said.

"Well, ok, but hurry," she said.

I made it there and then looked out the window to see the boys playing football. The quarterback tripped and fell in the dirt, then got up with blood and dirt all over his face.

"Oh, gross," I said out loud, then I realized what I had said.

"Lauren, get back to your seat right now," the teacher said.

"But Richard Crawford just fell in the dirt and got a bloody nose." Everyone got up and crowded around the window. I quickly went back to my seat and changed my answers before the excitement died down. As everyone went back to their seats, the teacher announced grades would be given tonorrow.

"I can't wait," Shannon said.

"Neither can I, neither can I."

"Some grades," she look at Shannon, "I was extremely surprised, but most I expected. We'll start with the A's: Michelle, Bryan, Jennifer, Elisa, Andrea, Tracy, Steven, and Lauren."

"The B's will be me," Shannon whispered to me.

"The B's: Erica, Matthew, Becky, Shelley, Kristen, Adam, Ryan, Chris, and Susan.

"This has got to be me," she said.

"And the C's: Melissa, Rosemary, Ashley, Erik, Jay, Stacy, Jeff, and ..." Shannon smiled, "...Heidi," Shannon's jaw dropped.

"But ... But ... how could Lauren get an A when I get an F. I ... we ... studied together."

"I know you don't deserve the grade you got, but I can't change it." the teacher said.

She breathed in and then ran out of the room.

"Lauren, what did you do now?" the teacher said.

"Nothing," I replied.

"Then why did Shannon run out of the room just now?"

"Maybe a sudden case of jungle malaria or typhoid. I hear there is a rare South American snake disease going around." The class snickered.

"Lauren, why are you always so ... so unusual?"

"Hormone deficiencies? Pre-menstrual syndrome? I don't know. I plead insanity."

"Just go to the office."

"But I'm not guilty until you prove it. I haven't had a fair trial. You haven't read my rights. I'll sue." I got up.

"I'm not sending you to death now, just the principals office." She opened the door.

"Same thing" I muttered as I went out the door.

I didn't see Shannon for a couple of days, but one day a girl came running up to me and exclaimed, "Did you hear?"

"What?"

"Shannon's in the hospital."

"What?"

"Shannon's in ..."

"I heard that much; how?"

"The police said that Shannon's teacher, you know, the one that flunked her." I nodded. Everyone knew about that. "Well, she called them and told them Shannon had flunked, and they said they would take care of it. Then they beat her up. I mean really bad. The parents said she fell down the stairs, but the bruises didn't knock, so they questioned the little sister, and she admitted they beat her up, too. Shannon even had a concussion and they think she's going to die." she said.

"No!" I started walking, then running down the crowded hallway. I turned the corner and ran into a display, hitting my nose. I put my hand up on my face and felt blood trickling down.

"Are you ok?" everyone crowded around me. "Are you ok? Are you ok?"

"Yea, sure. Yea, I'm fine. Just ... Just fine."

LONELINESS
Ioana Donea

Loneliness is white.
It feels like you're standing
in the middle of a room
with no exits.
Sometimes it sounds like
a song without words.
Or sometimes,
it looks like a blank,
like a white sheet of paper
And you're trying to read
something from it
but you can't,
because there's nothing there.
Loneliness is walking through life
without being noticed,
and sometimes,
without wanting to be noticed.
Loneliness is being alone
And you never know why ...
or how ...
or where ...
It's like you're always waiting for somebody,
and he never comes.
Loneliness is living a life in a world
made of nothing at all.

THE SKATEBOARD
Chris Rieber

"Well, are you or aren't you?" asked Adam, with a concerned expression on his face. "If you don't think that you can make it, don't try; but if not, move aside so Richard can go." I said nothing and looked back at the thin, grey line of pavement. It was just wide enough for a skateboard to fit on, starting at about seven feet up where we were standing and sloping down to an expanse of grass that led to a sidewalk below. On one side of the wall was grass; on the other side there was cement. It was obvious that if one went down on a skateboard, a slight shift of weight would cause a person to go over the edge, a painful experience to be sure. I looked once more at Adam, and then at Richard, who was having his doubts about the run as well. Seconds earlier, Adam had made it down flawlessly, but he was much more experienced than Richard or I.

The three of us had gathered at the University for an afternoon of skateboarding. We met by the Natural History Museum because that was the only place on campus that we all knew. Adam, who was the first to arrive (this is a part of his nature), was practicing some basic maneuvers when I came.

Adam was a caring individual who would always try to help people in need. In school several times he drew pictures for other people's research papers when they were behind. He also prevented many fights on the playground in grade school. Adam, though, was by no means a saint and had interesting ways of tormenting the people he resented. On one occasion, he sent the librarian in our old school a bomb threat which read: "There is a bomb in the dictionary under the letter 'B.'" He of course signed it with a fake name. Another one of his pranks was stealing journals and giving ransom notes to the owners.

It was five minutes before Richard showed up, and it was apparent that there was a heated argument going on in the car between him and his mother. He stepped out of the car and yelled: "I will not wear these stupid knee pads!" and walked with his board to join us. Then we were off.

By Rice Stadium, we encountered the strange architecture that surrounded the fountain, and discovered that it was ideal for our purposes. Among these features were very shallow steps that could be ridden down, and the slim walls of cement, which we were standing upon. Adam, still beaming with his triumph of making it down without breaking his neck, waited for me to make my decision. His bright green board reflected light into my eyes as I looked to him for some kind of encouragement. I pictured myself in an intensive care unit staring at two light blurs that I supposed were fluorescent lights. I could smell the antisceptic cleaner in the air. I heard two voices talking. One said, "What happened to him?"

"He took a bad fall on his skateboard. These kids have no respect for their own health. . . ." I tried not to listen.

Adam's voice broke the silence once more. "Come on, man, make up your mind. It's not that hard. Just lock your knees."

"I just don't know."

"Then move out of the way to think about it. You just can't stand there all day." I could tell his serene patience was wearing thin. I put my board down on the concrete strip to make it look like I was making my decision, just to buy time. I shivered with the thought of falling.

"Well?" asked Adam once again. "I think Richard would like a shot at it within the next hour, wouldn't he?"

"Speak for yourself," squeaked Richard.

I decided that my time was up and a decision had to be made. I carefully mounted my board but was pushed back by a hand. It was Adam's.

"Lock your knees, stupid! You wanna end up dead?"

"I guess not," I said. "Thanks."

"Okay, it's all yours now. Go for it!" I gingerly pushed off, and found to my horror that I was picking up speed faster than I had expected. I locked my knees and felt the wind rush past me. There was a pain in my stomach. About halfway down, I encountered a slight bump in the concrete that made me jump ever so slightly, but did not affect my descent. At the bottom I forgot the cardinal rule of riding on soft surfaces and went sprawling into the grass. I had survived.

KEDS
Jeni Kotok

Squish, squosh
We sink down
Like a submarine
Into the puddles.
Meeting the mud,
Treking the snow,
Soaking in winter.
The red laces
Flop around, and
My toes peek out --
Red and cold.

CREEPY PETE
April Keene

A jumble of arms

and legs

Pants drooping down

and boots.

Baldheaded

Stuffed with polyester

Slumping in a wicker

chair

Cotton-covered

Ears listen haphazardly

to the dull hum

of the TV

in the other corner

And eyes, beads of black,

watch the non-existent

pattern on the carpet

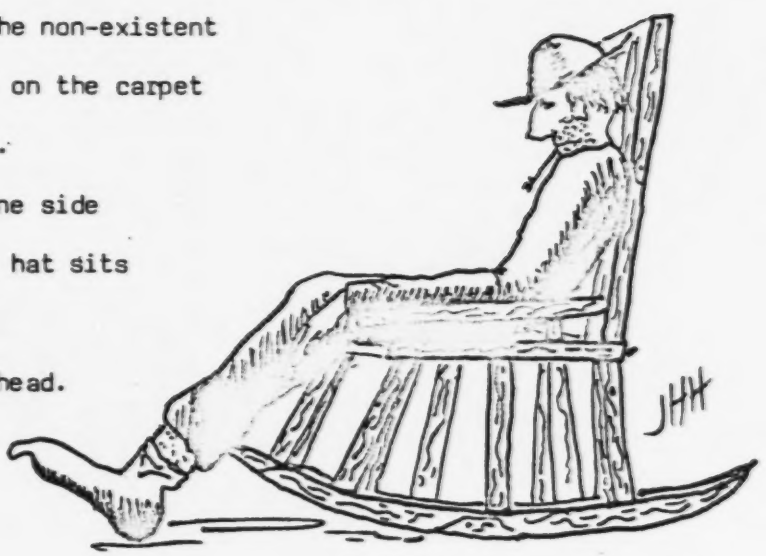
Plaid cowboy.

Tilting to one side

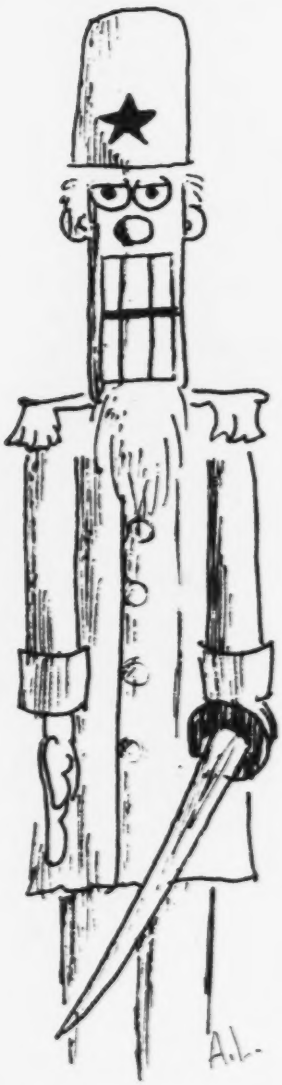
a straw hat sits

pertly

on his head.



THE NUTCRACKER
Casee Caldwell



He stands up tall upon my shelf.
And as I wondered to myself,
My, isn't he a remarkable sight,
All decked out with his suit so bright.
His clothes are plain,
but none of the others are anywhere the same.
His sharpened sword ready at hand,
for the order to fight in his fantasy land.
His eyes are all blue,
until they catch the light of a different hue.
His beard is soft and delicate,
like a strewing of angel's hair
He is an original.
Nothing else can compare.
His poise is impeccable, he never moves an inch.
Sometimes I think he must be quite uncomfortable.
How does he do it without having to even itch?
He stands at attention all night and day.
Waiting to see what we all say.
You can't compare him to a tiny little elf,
for he stands tall upon my shelf.

THE TOESHOE
Michelle Olsen

Persistent beats like funeral drums
Hands gripping, then rotating.
Spinning.
Crying as the toothless mouth
Swallows chalky dust
Looking out on hardwood
Floors.
And
Burning satin
Energy.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A "NATIONAL ENQUIRER" REPORTER
Mark Pett

We had to take a raft, as my companion was afraid of heights (YECCH!). My partner, Eric, who is also my cousin, is the kind of person who would put a lock on a secluded jungle hut. I remember the time he wore a parachute onto the roller coaster! Gads!!

As soon as Eric had secured the straps on his life preserver with a padlock, we were off on the Green River seeking the truth behind Loni Anderson's supposed love affair with Yasser Arafat. (We are reporters and photographers for the "National Enquirer").

As luck would have it, the adventure started out slow and calm. I was sitting on top of Eric's inflatable Funyak (a small boat that he brought along just in case) rowing hard, nearly snapping one of the wooden oars. I kept seeing mirages of abandoned outboard motors in running condition lying on the beach.

Around 6:00 PM, we reached a suitable campsite (though not up to Eric's standards, I found it suitable). I pitched the tent and began to loiter around down by the river. I admired the square knot that I used to tie the raft up with. I started back for camp, sieving the beach sand with my bare toes.

"Is that you?" Eric asked, as my shadow fell on the campfire.

"No, I'm still in the raft. This is just a preview of coming attractions."

"Cute. C'mon, help me get dinner ready."

"Naw, I'm gonna go down to the river and see if I can catch a whale."

"Right, but what'll you use for ... aw -- never mind. Say, you were a boy scout. Start a fire with these sticks."

"Well -- you see, I had a very bad case of the chicken pox when I was a kid, so I never got around to learning that stuff. Besides, I'm allergic to cats."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Well, uh -- there's a giant saber-toothed tiger in back of you!"

"There is?!" and he dropped in a faint.

I fell asleep laughing.

The following morning, my companion woke up first:

"Hey, idiot!"

I opened my eyes, though still in a trance. "Yeah?"

"Wake up! The raft's all ready. You're the only thing keeping us."

"Yeah, well go without me."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because -- uh -- you're the only one who can untie that so-called 'square knot' of yours."

"All right, already. I'm coming."

"What? Did you glue this thing to the ground? The raft won't budge."

"Try untying the rope."

I ended up cutting it.

A ways down the river, my partner asked me, "What is coming up next on the river?"

"Hell's Half Mile," I replied.

"Gee, sounds like a doozie."

I examined the photograph of a raft fighting a giant wave in the river guide. We could hear the crashing waves far before they were actually in sight. My fingers held numbly to the oars.

"Amen," my partner said in a whisper, as though ending a prayer.

Seeing a kayak flattened against a rock sent a chill down my spine as we entered "Hell's Half Mile." We entered the "Hell's Half Mile" zone and massive waves threatened us as we dodged rocks and risked our lives for this "National Enquirer" story. Ahead of us, I heard loud sounds of falling water. A waterfall! I tried to steer clear of the swiftly flowing water which gained us access to the waterfall, but found no other way of passing through. A lump rested in my throat as we slid over the side of the waterfall. About five feet in height, the thing nearly overturned us. A few minutes later, though, after my sanity had returned to me, I decided it was fun, and wanted to do it over. My friend, however, didn't.

"Phew!" I heard Eric say.

It wasn't over, however. Shallow water revealed usually hidden rocks. A wave broke in front of us and showed a large, unconcealed rock. I failed to steer clear of it and we slid up onto the massive obstacle. The sharp top punctured our boat in the rubber bottom. I shook my head in confusion.

"Quick! Abandon ship!" Eric screamed, clutching his deflated Funyak and leaping over the side in bravery.

After debating the idea, I reluctantly followed. My head bobbed up and down in the river water. Beside me floated a portion of our previously occupied raft. I floated to shore and walked out, my life preserver flattened against my wet skin.

"All right?" Eric asked.

"Yeah. Gee, that was frightening. I'm glad you brought your funyak otherwise we'd have to swim the rest of the way."

After some hard blowing, two red-faced cousins deposited an inflated, small water vessel into the water. It was a kayak-type boat that was designed for fun. A detatchable oar was packed inside.

We continued our journey down Hell's Half Mile. Dodging many waves simultaneously, we made our way down the white-water rapids. We made a dip just before a giant wave tried to massacre us. We sunk under and shot out the other side. We were still afloat! (Our boat could pass as a wading pool, but we were still afloat!) We chuckled over the previous happening. We slid over a small rock and unexpectedly flung over. I peered up at shimmering green waters. I struggled away from the vacuum. When my head was above water, I gasped for air (as I had used it all up when blowing up the Funyak). Eric appeared about the same time. I swam for the Funyak as Eric swam for the alluminum oar.

After retrieving the equipment, we headed for shore. There we were talking:

"Say I think I know what that was," Eric said.

"What?"

"A maytag. They make the water vacuum down, therefore causing the person to be sucked under."

"And you know what else," I said.

"What?" he asked.

"We're standing in quicksand!" and I looked down at my buried feet.

Making high steps we got to the raft and continued down the river.

A ways after escaping from Hell's Half Mile, Eric ordered me to hand him the oar. He frantically rowed for shore. I saw a silhouette of a waving person.

It was Loni.

MARY AND HER LITTLE LAMB
Michelle Olsen

Mary had a little lamb
With fleece as white as dirt;
She tried so hard while walking home
To hide it in her skirt.

You see, this very afternoon,
Right about, say, two,
The little lamb had run away
Without a single clue.

Mary soon came looking, though,
And found the little brute.
The first thing that she did to him
Was give him a quick boot.

The lamb was baaing pitifully;
It cried and cried that day,
For Mary drew a gun on it
And blew the lamb away.

The story does not end there;
No--it is not done,
For Mary now is in the jail
On trial for murder one.

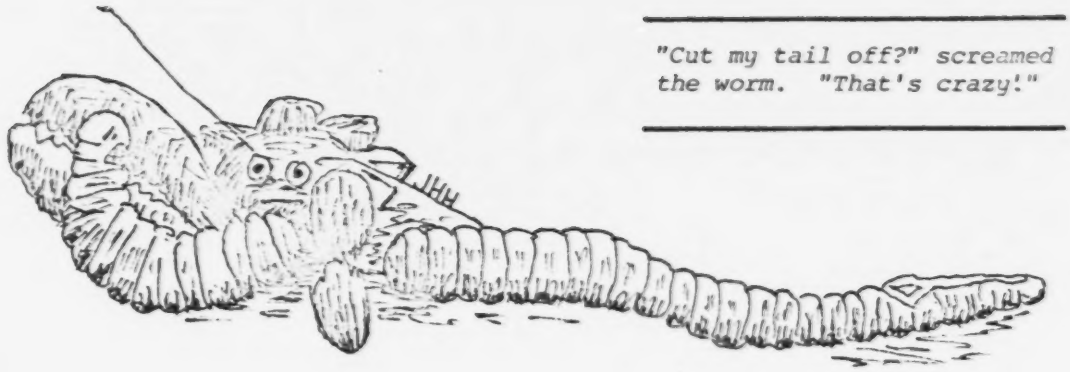
ODE TO A BUG
Tamary Reynolds

A bug is squished
Upon the ground,
I stare in shock
At what I've found
I've done.

This harmless bug
Did nought to me,
And I did this,
And it won't see
The sun.

This bug I killed,
It found its fate;
Because of me
My Human Hate
Its lot,

So this small bug
Without a blink
Got squooshed; and it
Will never think
Another buggy thought.



"Cut my tail off?" screamed the worm. "That's crazy!"

THE TATTOOED WORM
Jason Payne

Once upon a time there was a very sad worm. He was sad because while he was in the navy he had gotten a large tattoo of a naked inch-worm printed on his back. At the time he thought it was macho to have a tattoo but he soon found otherwise. All of the worms in his troop teased him about it. Then one day he could take it no more. He jumped overboard and swam to shore. When he got onto the beach he met a limping lobster. The lobster said that he limped because one day he and his mean-spirited friend the slug were having an argument and the slug bit the lobster on the leg. Then the lobster noticed how sad the worm was so he asked him what was the matter. The worm told the lobster his troubles and asked him if he could help. The lobster didn't know what to do but he said that the slug might know because he was very smart. So they both went to the home of the slug which was under the pier. They found the slug in his chair reading a book. When they got his attention and told him the worm's trouble and he saw the tattoo, the slug started laughing hysterically. When he calmed down he started to talk.

"The only thing that can be done," he said, still laughing, "would be to cut your tail off."

"Cut my tail off?" screamed the worm. "That's crazy!"

"Well, you asked my advice. You would only be a few inches shorter anyway. We could have the lobster snip it off with his pincher. It would hardly hurt at all."

Finally the worm agreed to have his tail cut off. Anything would be better than having an ugly tattoo. He put his tail in the lobster's pincher. Then the lobster pinched three inches of his tail off. It hurt much more than the slug had said. Then the worm saw himself and he screamed with horror. He was only a centimeter long. Now he was even more miserable than before.

The moral of this story is: Never get a tattoo.

THE BURNT BANANA PEEL
Colleen Cooper

I followed Mrs. Tompson in the front door of the apartment and tried unsuccessfully to shut the door. It had been painted so many times it wouldn't fit in its frame unless it was slammed.

"Hi," I said trying to set a friendly atmosphere. All I got in return was a few cold glares and a "Be quiet."

Aaron sat with his feet over the back of the couch and his head hanging from the seat. Tisan crouched in the corner of the couch, and Crandle stood with his arms perched on the edge of the couch eating red licorice and spreading half of it on his face.

"Well, it looks like you'll have to have burnt pizza," Mrs. Tompson said. "I forgot to turn the oven off before I left to pick you up."

"That's ok," I said hoping I could cook it the next time.

"There's a note on the table and I'll see you at eight," she said slipping out the front door.

* * * *

I sat on the couch relaxing as I watched Aaron and Tisan play tag over the furniture. They had seemed to make a routine route that they chased each other around. But soon they tired of the game.

"Can I take your backpack to school?" Aaron said.

"No," I said a little amazed he had even dared ask.

"Why not?" he whined. "You could come and get it tomorrow."

"Why would I want to come over tomorrow?"

"Because if you didn't, I'd have to keep it," he said all too simply.

"Are any of you hungry?" I said changing the subject.

"No," Tisan sighed as if the idea of food bored him.

* * * *

Around 5:45 I noticed that Tisan was missing. As I neared the bathroom door I heard a snip that sounded like scissors.

"Tisan what are you doing?" I said as I peeked around the door.

What I saw made me want to cry. Tisan stood there a skinny little boy with sagging pants and weak knees. He kept his mouth open as habit when he breathed and his socks were only half on his feet.

"Snip" he brought both hands from the back of his head. One hand held a pair of scissors and the other a handful of hair which he dropped to the floor with a proud smile.

"What did you do that for?" I yelled, near hysterics. I could see already he had taken a few snips out of the front of his bangs.

"My hair was too long."

"But why did you have to cut it while I was here?" It came out more like a plea than a question.

He just stared right through me with those big buggy brown eyes like I was some kind of crazy person. This made me change my whole perspective and I became angry. I swooped down practically tearing the scissors from his hand and slammed them down in the basket at the back of the toilet seat. Then I dragged him from the room and shoved the broom toward him ordering him to clean up the mess before I really got mad.

* * * *

"I want to light the match," Tisan said.

"No," my answer was firm for I had no intentions of getting into more trouble for him. I was still thinking of excuses for his hair, though none were better than the truth.

May macaroni came out gooey and the cheese sauce was like unstirred corn meal. This must not have been unusual though because they were finished off first.

"Where are you going Tisan?" I said as he walked toward the kitchen with a plate of burnt pizza crust.

"I need a drink of water".

"Keep it in there", I warned "so you won't have to worry about spilling it."

"I won't spill it," he argued. "My mommy always lets me have water in here.

"I'm not your mommy and I say keep it in there."

He stomped off into the kitchen with Crandle at his heels.

About a minute later Crandle walked into the front room. He held a glass filled with water which he set at my side. As he tried to crawl up on my lap more weight tipped the cushion and spilled the water soaking the bottom of my pants.

"Tisan," I yelled as I jumped up feeling what I would call my version of an icy cold sensation. "Did you give Crandle this water?" I knew he had. "Come and get it and don't you dare give him any more."

I handed him the cup and proceded in brushing water out of my pants.

* * * *

"What's that smell?" I said.

I got up and walked into the kitchen. As I rounded the corner I almost choked on my breath I was so surprised.

The garbage can was full of flames. I took one giant step towards the sink, filled the nearest kettle with water and threw it toward the garbage can. It put out the fire all right. The garbage can was a small waterfall as a banana peel with burnt ends floated to the top of the can.

"My daddy's home," Aaron yelled from the front room.

THIS IS JUST TO SAY
Jason Payne

I have thrown away
the dentures
that were in
the glass by your bed

and which
you were probably
saving
to eat breakfast with.

Forgive me
they were repulsive,
so stale
and so yellow.

BLACK FOREST
Tanya Radomski

The vast expanse
Of never-ending pine trees,
Tall and silent.

Cool, fresh air
Gently lopes
Through the
Moire pattern of trees.

Soft, bouncy,
Moss-covered ground
Muffles every sound
Made by stirring creatures.

Trees,
So dark, so dense,
Look so forbidding
Yet
So peaceful and inviting.

Soon all to be destroyed
By acid rain.

FEAR
Andrea Farnsworth

Fear is black.
It creeps over your shoulder
when you least expect it
and then squeezes your heart
until the pulse beats loudly in your head.
It sounds like a thousand voices,
softly whispering wild ideas
of escaping fate.
It acts like a terrified child,
looming in the shadows of everlasting darkness;
and looks like an underground tunnel,
misty with fog and cobwebs,
waiting to unfold its dark secrets
of unmistakable terror.

BALLOON BOY
Alyssa Eyre

Did you ever sit behind a fat kid in school, and you couldn't see the board? Well, there's this kid in the fourth grade named Lucas Lightbrow and he sits behind Jacko Maloney, who's the fattest kid in school. Picture the Goodyear Blimp with a butch haircut and little floppy ears, and there's Jacko.

The teacher, Ms. Thistletog, is writing on the board this incredible list of things that come from soybeans, and everyone's penciling away like crazy to keep up, because she's the kind of teacher who erases the board whether you have it copied or not, only, like I said, Lucas can't see the board. So he reckons that since he sits in the very back of the room, and since Ms. T. is facing the board, it might be safe to float. Just a little, just high enough to see the board over Jacko, so he floats up out of his chair, about ten inches. Nobody will see him floating only ten inches; only before he knows it, the ten inches is two feet, and Lucas is gritting his teeth and hating himself for being so dumb as to fly in school again.

Let me tell you how it is with Lucas when he flies; sometimes he can soar as easily as a gull; most times he just kind of swims through the air; but every now and then he just rises and hangs like a blimp and nothing can make him come down until whatever it is wears off.

So here he is in his blimp phase giving himself fifty lashes in his mind, and he rises a couple of more feet and bounces against the ceiling; he tries to make himself come down, but he can't. He pushes off against the ceiling, but bobs back up again like a balloon.

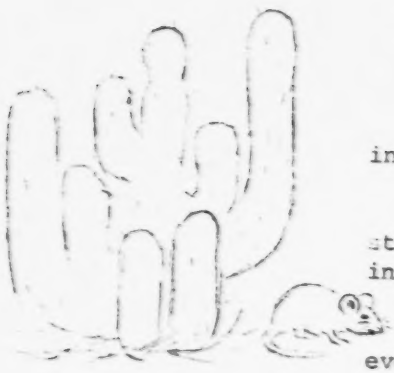
He wishes he could change into a spit-wad so that he could just lie in on top of a light fixture with all the rubber bands and the dead flies until his floaty phase goes away.

Maybe he could ease out the window; he looks around. The back door's closed, but the front corner door under the flag is propped open by Ms. T's ruler.

If he could just make it through that far door, maybe in a few minutes he could walk back in with some story about how the principal wanted to see him about a special award or something.. It's his only shot, so he slowly, carefully, paddles like a duck toward the front corner door. Jacko yawns and stretches; Lucas freezes and tries as hard as he can to look like a cobweb, and Jacko finally gets back into soybeans.

At last he's hovering alongside that little gold pointy thing on the flag stick, and luckily no one looks up, so he's staring at the door, wondering, knowing that he's got to try it. He takes careful aim, holds his breath, and pushes off against the ceiling. He reaches for the door jamb and misses. The ruler falls, the door slams, and everybody looks up. Lucas grabs the flag and wraps it around him; Ms. Thistletog is down there barking his name and he pulls the original thirteen colonies tighter around him, but it's no use. She's poking at him with her ruler; with trembling fingers he pulls back the stars and peeks around the corner of Nebraska right into the face of his mother who pokes him one more time.

"Son, come down from that bunk. You're going to be late for school."



LONELINESS
Glenn Ouyang

Loneliness is the taste of dull water
in an abandoned shack high in the mountains.

Loneliness feels like a hot tan desert
stretching out farther as you crawl desperately
in search of water.

Loneliness is the smell of pollution
everywhere you hide.

Loneliness is a black room with no sound
or movement--Just the still silence of space.

CURIOSITY
Jeni Kotok

A thin green vine
That's stronger than it looks.
You begin to
Play with it
And you're trapped!

Its sweet taste
Draws anyone
Into its power
It acts without thinking
Fun comes first.

That sweet-sour lemon smell
Catches your attention,
And tells you
To go for it -
Why not?

Watch out for curiosity
Because after it's got you
There is no easy way
To
Get
Out.

MY HEAD INJURY
Jay Jaffe

I opened my eyes and saw my teacher and the school nurse standing over me. Groggily I asked myself what was going on. Then it all started to return to me. I remembered it slowly as if it were an instant replay.

The soft orange Nerf football settled into my outstretched arms as I carried it across the goal line in triumph.

"Good catch! A few teammates congratulated me as the supervisor blew her whistle signalling the end to our fun. As I walked in I heard someone yell, "Lucky. If I hadn't slipped you wouldn't have scored." It was my friend Steve, who was playing sore loser.

"Lucky? It's all skill. I'm too good." I flashed him a grin a mile wide.

"Ha-ha-ha-ha." Steve was doubled over, laughing so hard his face was pink. "You're terrible. My little sister's Raggedy Ann doll is better. A quadraplegic could have caught the ball." He was still laughing.

"At least I don't like Cindy Smith." Steve stopped laughing. He turned a bright purple and looked angry enough to wrestle an ox. I had found a chink in his armor, a huge one.

"Help!" I ran in terror. I must've run a 100 yard stretch in about 2.3 seconds. I almost made it into the classroom. Almost. Close only counts in horseshoes and grenades, though.

Steve wrestled me into a headlock, no big accomplishment because he was two inches taller and 20 pounds heavier. "Now, as you were saying about Cindy Smith?" He applied more pressure. Cindy Smith could be used in a Purina dog food commercial, as the dog, but I shut up, seeing how much one comment got me into trouble.

I said something clever. "Huh?" I was trying to stall, hoping my teacher would save me.

He applied more pressure. "You heard me!" At that instant I used a self defense move my friend Mike taught me. It broke his hold and I dove for the room.

I never made it. Steve caught my coat sleeve. We engaged in a tug-of-war. I finally pulled the coat from him, but the inertia threw me back. My head hit a sharp corner of a brick wall and I was knocked silly. I laughed. I felt for a lump. I knew I would have one to

remember this occasion by. Instead of a lump I felt a warm liquid. I brought my hand down. It was covered in an all too familiar shade of red. I passed out at that moment.

All of this flashed through my head in only a few seconds. As I came to my senses, I felt a lukewarm washcloth rub over my face and forehead.

"Ooh, that'll take a dozen stitches to close." It was my teacher. "I'll send up your books and your assignment."

I lay down after the washcloth. Many thoughts ran through my head. "Will they have to shave my head? Will stitches hurt? What will my parents think?" All of these thoughts ran through my mind.

"You don't look too hot." It was Mike, one of my two best friends. I had known him for two years. Mike and Jeff and I all hung around together, like Three Musketeers. Mike was Japanese. He was always peering suspiciously through thin slanty eyes. When he got mad he would stare people down. The stare he gave you was so cold and hard you felt like you were about to be stepped on like an ant. But he was also a good friend. He was the kind of guy who would lend you money and not bug you to pay it back.

"What do you mean, don't look too hot? Ice packs and blood and messy hair is ugly?" We burst out laughing even though I hurt.

"I remember once John and Mark were bugging me. I was eight, John was nine and Mark was eleven. John threw a rock at me and hit me right in the forehead." He brushed back his hair to reveal a two inch scar. "John got real scared. He cried. I hope dad doesn't kill me. My dad grounded him for the rest of the summer. I think John thought my dad would actually kill him, chop his head off or something."

"Seriously?" I pictured John crying. John was now about five and a half feet and muscular. You didn't want to be on his bad side. Fortunately I wasn't. I was on a soccer team with him once and he was quite nice. I remember once he gave me about ten football cards I needed to complete the full set. He was similar to his brother in his generosity.

"With an ax." He shook his head.

"What's it like getting stitches?"

"You'll love 'em. They give you a shot in the arm with a horse needle and sew you up with a type of sewing machine. It sands your head."

"Uh-huh, sure. If you say so." We both cracked up. "That's a crock, Mike." Mike and I always needle each other. I bug him about being built

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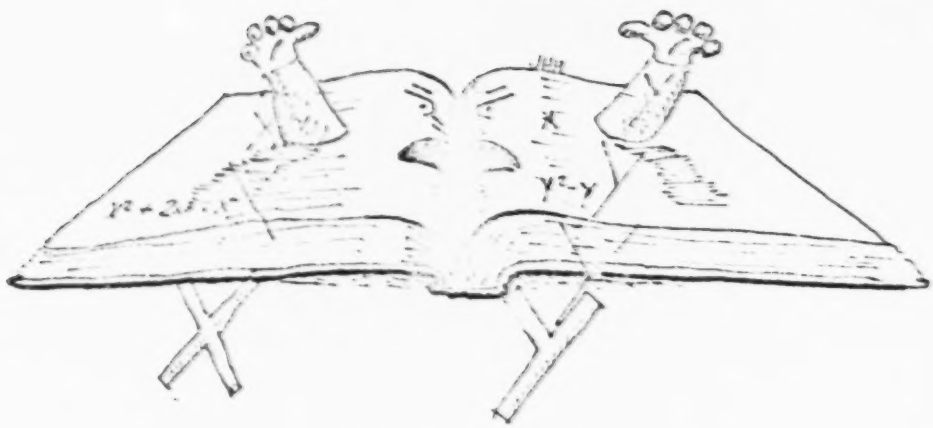
scrawny like me instead of husky like John and Mark. "They probably just ran out of muscles when they got to me" was his favorite excuse for that. Just then the school nurse came in and told me that my mother had arrived.

"Well, Mike, if I don't die I'll call you tonight. If I die I'll call you tomorrow."

"If you do die, can I have your football cards?"



THE DREADED ALGEBRA BOOK
Tom Kim

They are gargantuan
The look of them intimidate me
My mind starts to panic . . .
As I open the pages.
The twelve-termed equation
Roars at me with fury
I try to recall
The procedure of working the problem.
But the glare of the x's
Gives me amnesia
As the teacher approaches
I desperately look to the back of the book:
The answer would be there.
But I face another omen
The problem is even
There would be no answer
I have to do it alone.

SIXTH GRADE WAS A BLAST
Lisa Halversen

Sixth grade was a blast--
I have to tell ya:
We read and read
till our eyes were tired.
One day I remember
our librarian came in,
grabbed Chris, Robyn, and me.
I knew where we were headed:
the principal's office for us,
because we read a book
that we shouldn't have!
We went in and sat down,
knees shaking and all;
he brought out the book
and held it up high.
Then he asked, "Did you enjoy it?"
What was I to say?
"Yes, it was great"?
I couldn't say that;
'twas a little too late!
I sat and wondered
what would happen next
till the librarian said,
in a rude sort of way,
"I read a book like this
when I was your age
and I was HORRIFIED!"
We sat staring down
until our principal followed,
"I read one just like it
and thought it was great!"

CHRISTMAS
Karen Lloyd

A fantasy world with glass balls and bows
When the whole world is a blanket of snow.
Strings of lights and tall green trees
With brightly wrapped presents for you
And for me.

Then comes the night when carols are sung
The whole family watches while stockings are hung.
It's on this evening when you can't settle down
But lie awake restless in your warm Christmas gown.

Then in the morning when you do rise
There's too much to see with just your eyes.
There are presents to open and things to eat
But being together is really the treat.

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90% TEST
Chris Sobchack

Everyone was huddled around the score sheets as though it was a cold winter day and the score sheets were a warm and inviting fire. All the Algebra students were pushing to the front of the line, to see what they had received on the big three hundred point test.

I saw Frank, my best friend, as he fell out of the human pile.

"I got a 75, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!" he said. "What did you get?"

"I don't care; I just don't want to get stuck in that mass, trying to find out," I said. "I probably got a 65 -- who knows?"

All weekend I had waited to find out that score; it was eating away at my unconscious mind; I had to know what I had received.

The test had gone somehow very smoothly. All the problems were right there, as though I had known the problems and answers to all of them before the test. I was done with all of them in ten minutes except for two which were troublesome, but even those I worked out quickly.

I stared at the two most opposite seats in the class: the first seat first row, the seat that the person with the best test score sat in, and the last seat last row, the seat that a student dreaded. It was like sitting in an electric chair waiting for the surge of electricity to flow through your veins.

I was tapping on a desk as the bell rang and the teacher stepped up to her worn, oaken-brown briefcase. She opened the clasps in the same order as always, right to left and then pulled out the tests. She walked over the the first seat and pulled out a test paper and slammed it on the desk.

"First seat, Johnson, a 90%" she said.

I had received a 90%! I sat down dazed slightly as all the students came to me to see what a 90 looked like. It was then that I saw Frank. He looked as though all the air had come out of his birthday balloon. It was also a look of slight admiration. Class started, but I hardly heard her speak.

I HAVE A DREAM ...

Mark Pett

"Elementary, my dear Watson," I explained to my assistant, after nabbing the notorious "Cat Burglar". My best friend and I are great admirers of the great Sherlock Holmes. Our destiny is to solve an actual case using the techniques of the magnificent detective. But, while in waiting, we're studying Holmes's stupendous victories.

Today, we've been chosen to tackle the case of the slaughtered penguin. The head officer at the South Pole had called on us especially to give this case our best shot. We went into the hills, as if they were the icy glaciers of the South Pole. Suddenly, we heard talking:

"I don't think we should follow through, Sam. I think the cops are catching on," said one of the men around the campfire.

"Aw, shuddup, snotbreath. It's too late to turn back," said the boss. "Besides, four more deliveries and it'll be over. Don't worry."

"Oh-oh," I said. "These guys probably mean trouble. Think we should stick around?"

"I -- I guess so," my partner muttered nervously, so we sat motionless behind some naked shrubs.

"It's about time we headed for the field," one of the men said. And they all headed toward an open area behind some trees.

A whirling sound was to be heard overhead. A large package dropped down toward an open circle.

"Drug smugglers!" I said, gasping under my breath. "So these guys really <u>are</u> criminals."

"I think I've seen the leader's face on a post office wall," my partner added. "These guys are professionals. Maybe we should leave this to the law."

"Nothing doing. This is the break we've been waiting for. If we catch these guys, it'll prove that we're qualified to be detectives."

"And if we don't?" my associate reminded me. "We could get into a lot of trouble."

"Stop worrying. Sssh! They're leaving. Come on!"

The burglars took the package into a barn, and we followed. Suddenly, a hand grasped my shoulder. I spun around to face the ugly, unshaved, sleezy excuse for a human being who had possession of it.

"What're kids doin' in these here parts?" asked the sleezball with a Southern accent.

"Er ... looking for a kite," I replied stupidly, and immediately realized we were in trouble.

Before you could say "antidesestablishmentarianism" the monster had us securely tied to a post in the barn, and it didn't exactly smell like a pastry shop on opening night. He started to exit.

"Er ... wait a minute," my companion said. "That dumb excuse that my friend here made about the kite was just asn alibi for the real purpose we're here."

"What the ------(censored) is he talking about?" I asked myself.

"You see, we're really gods coming down to earth to check on unholy examples. And I can prove we are, too," my friend (or ex-friend) continued.

"Duh -- what do ya' mean?" asked the reject from the Happy Dale Sanitarium.

"Well, for instance, take this," and he picked up an egg,"and try to break it. I will make it so invincible that it will resist your strength. After he had been untied, my partner stuck the egg vertically between his fingers.

The man stressed with great might, but couldn't achieve the simple task. "Golly, the egg won't break."

"Correct. Now I will reverse the process," my associate said, and he removed the egg from the man's hand. "Now you will be able to crush the egg," and he stuck it horizontally into the man's hand.

"Duh-- alrighty, here goes," and the guy crushed the egg with little effort. The gut-like yolk ran over his hand.

"Now if I were you, I would surrender yourself and your gang, or otherwise ..."

"Gee, I guess I'm had. Please don't hurt me," said the scuzball nervously. "I'll go call the police."

"You do that," I said, after stupidly sitting around for the past fifteen minutes.

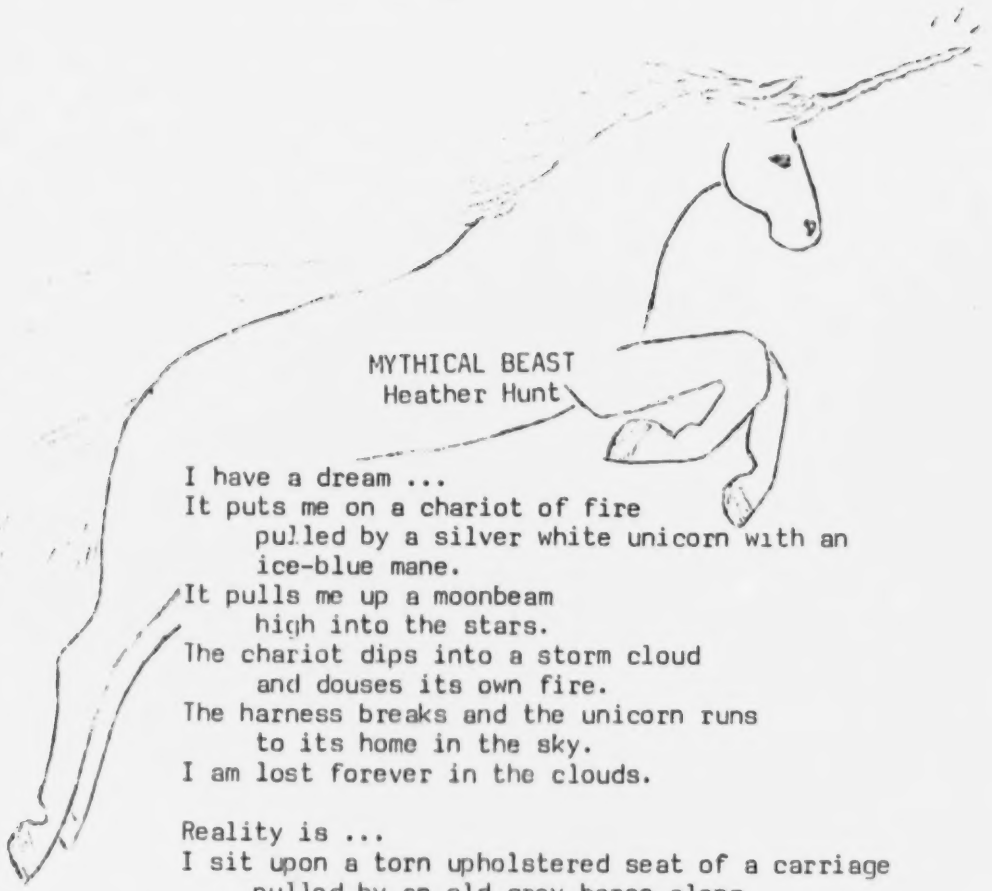
Not long after that, red lights from police cars discolored the scenery. The criminals were brought to justice, and we proudly and conceitedly bragged our story to bystanders.

"Gee, how'd you do that?" I inquired of my companion.

"Everyone (with a few exceptions) knows that when an egg is placed vertically in someone's hand, it can resist a tremendous amount of pressure."

"Huh?"

"Elementary, my dear Watson."



MYTHICAL BEAST
Heather Hunt

I have a dream ...
It puts me on a chariot of fire
pulled by a silver white unicorn with an
ice-blue mane.
It pulls me up a moonbeam
high into the stars.
The chariot dips into a storm cloud
and douses its own fire.
The harness breaks and the unicorn runs
to its home in the sky.
I am lost forever in the clouds.

Reality is ...
I sit upon a torn upholstered seat of a carriage
pulled by an old grey horse along
a snowy street lighted by a street lamp.
It plods through the battlefield for a
snowball fight.
The driver leads the horse up a ramp to
its stall.
The familiar smell of oil and gas comes
from the stove pipe.
I am home at last.

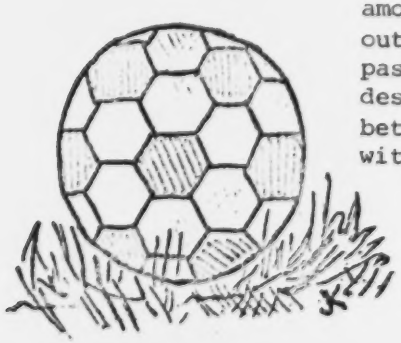
SILVER
Aaron Landry

Silver is paladin, plate mail, and sword.
Bright, gleaming, and blinding;
Good and noble quests.
A shiny helmet, crested with a silver lion,
A talisman with molten silver runes.
Ah, silver, thy name is as bright
as a bardic tune.

Slam Dunk
Matt Richards

The ball is suspended
    in mid air,
Slowly coming for its mark:
    your hands.
Sweat streams
    in your eyes.
Your band is bothering you.
You're hit,
you jump,
    Spring
    Spread
    Stretch
    Strive
The hand curves,
        Up,
            Over.
The ball slides,
    Down,
        In mid air,
            Through!

Hoo-ray!
    Hoo-ray!



THE BIG GAME
Peter Cannon

Past midfield
along the sideline
around the halfbacks
to his forward
between the fullbacks
through the penalty box
off the field
into play
down the line
beyond the goal
with desperation
over the fullback
up the field
across the half-line
near out-of-bounds
toward the center
against the clock
among a crowd
out of a crowd
past the goalie
despite the pressure
between the goal posts
without any time!
    Victory!

THE WILD RIDE
Jason Payne

Everything seemed fine out on the quiet river. I could smell the crisp fresh scent of the pine trees on the bank. We were in calm water but I could hear the roar of the rushing rapids ahead.

The river-tour guide was a tall, muscular man. If anything happened he looked like he could help us out of it. He was telling us the safety tips while he paddled the raft out slowly in the middle of the river.

"Stay seated on the edge of the raft; not in the bottom. If you sit in the bottom, you could get hurt by the rocks underneath the water. When you paddle, lean out like this." He leaned out of the raft and pushed us lightly through the water.

"When you lean out, stick your feet under one of the two crossbeams in the middle of the raft. Then you won't fall out." I tried it but my legs were too short. I could just barely inch my toes under the beam but that wouldn't keep me in the boat if I tried to paddle in the rapids.

I looked at my 18 year old cousin Scott to see if he noticed that my feet wouldn't go under the crossbeam but he was too busy cleaning his fingernails to notice. His feet were already under the beam and that was all he cared about. He didn't care about anyone but himself. Scott is the kind of person who woudln't share a blanket with you if you were on the edge of a cliff in the freezing hail.

Scott loves everything but people. He has a pet dog, a pet parrot, and a guppy. He loves every one of them more than any person. He has fixed up little houses for all of the animals. His parrot has a little vest that he sometimes wears and also a few other little things that he can wear. Scott gave Talisman (that's the parrot's name) a little washer and dryer set for when the parrot needed to wash his clothes. His guppy's name is Trueman and in his water tank there is a miniature Atlantis that he can play in. His parrot is allergic to dogs so Scott has to keep Knilander, his bulldog, in a house outside. He cared so much for the dog that he fixed up a little heating system in the dog house. Knilander also has his own bathroom and refrigerator.

I remember one night when a bad storm came in. It was raining and thundering. Scott felt sorry for his dog and so, after saying goodnight to Trueman and Talisman, he went outside in the freezing rain to keep Knilander company. He couldn't fit in the small guestroom in the dog-house because it was made to fit Knilander's best friend, Herb. Herb is a French poodle. So Scott sat outside all night under a ferm to keep Knilander company.

Now the boat started to go a little faster and kept gaining speed. The river became narrower and it felt like the cliffs of jagged rocks on both sides of us were trying to smash us or swallow us up. We were entering the rapids.

As the boat continued to go faster I became nervous. I couldn't quite hold on to the paddle right because it was too big. Every time we would hit a wave I would be thrown off balance. I tried to lean towards the middle of the raft but I couldn't because there were people on both sides of me and I couldn't get my paddle past them. I had to hold my paddle up so it wouldn't touch the water and throw me out. That was a hard thing to do because the paddle was so heavy.

Soon it became really rough and I became scared. The water was becoming extremely rough. We were constantly hitting five and six foot waves. Then the river guide yelled back to us.

"Hold on! That's Devil's Dip ahead!" I looked up and saw what he was talking about. The wave must have been at least eight feet high and it went straight up. I tightened my grip on the paddle. Then, just before we were to hit the monsterous wave, the raft tilted sharply to the left.

My paddle dug into the raging water and I was flipped head-first into the river. I opened my eyes and tiny bubbles were all around me. I could feel them popping as they touched my skin. I began to panic and I breathed in some water. It stung the insides of my nostrils and the back of my throat. I coughed frantically and paddled with my arms and legs. I felt my head come out of the water and I looked up just in time to see the end of my paddle going over the raging monster that I was about to hit. I closed my eyes.

I felt my legs being pulled up over my head and I tried to fight it out. It was no use. The current was too strong. I was flipped upside down. Then I could feel myself being pulled straight up into the air and let down again. I felt the cold air on my face so I opened my eyes. I was facing backwards, looking at the horror that I had just passed.

The water was still rough but it was becoming calmer. As I was jostled about I found myself riding along next to the raft.

"Help!" I gasped just before I went under again. I thrust out my hand for Scott to grab. It came about three feet from the raft.

"Jason, I taught you how to swim when you were seven and you've got a life jacket on. You'll be okay. Anyway, if I try to save you now I might fall in too. We wouldn't want that, would we?" said Scott, gripping tight to the boat.

"Oh, no Scott, we couldn't have that," I said as I brought my feet in front of me to steady myself. I looked ahead and saw that there were no more really big waves and decided that it would be safe to float along and tell Scott what I thought of him. "You can just meet me at the bottom of the falls. Just look for a body sprawled on some red rocks."

"Here Jason! Give me your hand if it will shut you up!" As he said this I braced my feet on the edge of the raft and took his hand.

"You sure know how to be a nuisance, don't you. I knew I should have brought Knilander instead of you! At least he wo..."

He never finished that sentence, because when I took his hand, I pulled him in with me. Then, with the help of a woman laughing hysterically, I climbed into the raft.

By then everyone was laughing at the sight of my cousin swimming to shore. I heard him yelling obscenities back at us as I received numerous pats on the back and handshakes from the people around me.

RICO
Jennifer Floor

Wakes us up in the morning,
    like a fire has started
    and he's the alarm.
A used feather duster
    with a two-inch pile of dust--
but soft, like the inside
    of a pillow.
A sharp yellow beak
with jaws that would bite anything
    off.
A black worm for a tongue,
that's black and slithers
    around.
Long eyelashes that flutter
    at night.
My bird, who squawks happily
every night and morning.
    My bird, Rico.

DISCORDIA
Chris Rieber

Ask me of discordia
an unaccounted giant leap
an unwanted computer bleep
coming to us as we sleep
that's discordia.

Tell me of discordia
an unexpected message sent
a set of words that were not meant
electronic government
what discordia.

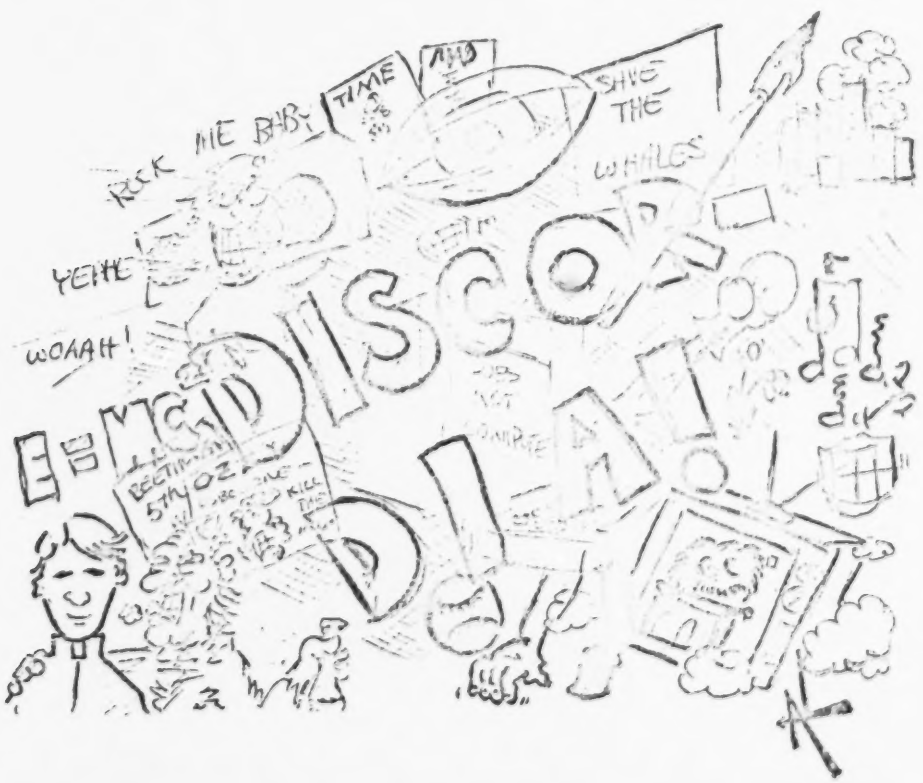
Tell you of discordia
Soviet espionage
practice it in your garage
then explain it to the guards
such discordia.

Tell us of discordia
a boy on thin ice falls right through
a housemaid drowning in beef stew
"big brother is watching you"
mad discordia.

What about discordia
when they explode the atom bomb
a vanguished husband pleads for calm
at his screaming kids and mom
in discordia.

After mad discordia
when it is your turn to die
find your place up in the sky
will the mourners laugh or cry
with discordia.

Ask me of discordia
drowning in a sea of glue
Boundaries, there are none of, too
the rest of it is up to you
your discordia.



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